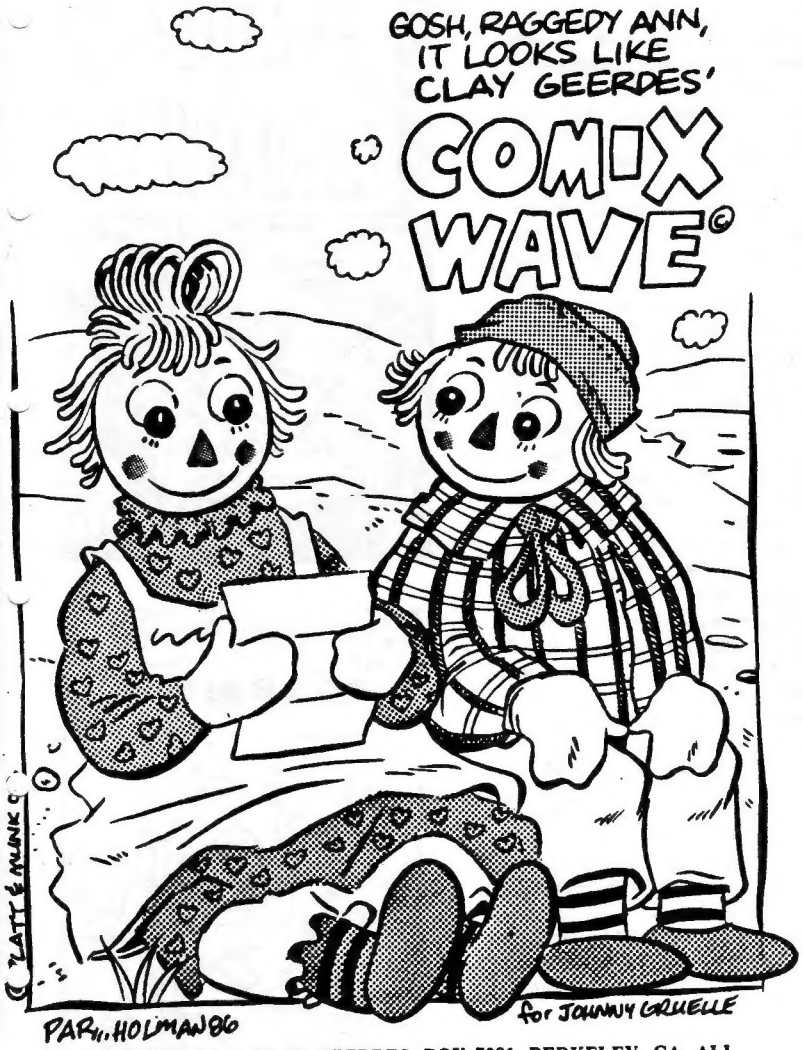

COMIX WAVE 47. © CLAY GEERDES, BOX 7081, BERKELEY, CA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. SUBS: $6 FOR 12. LOGO: PAR HOLMAN. THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHNNY GRUELLE, 1880-1938, THE CREATOR OF RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY.

RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY

Marcella Gruelle found an old rag doll made by her grandmother. Her Daddy told her a lot of stories about it's adventures, which he later wrote down and published. True? Well, I'm skeptical about that origin story, mainly because there is so much of L. Frank Baum's PATCHWORK GIRL OF OZ in those early RAGGEDY ANN stories. Baum brought a scarecrow to life in THE WIZARD OF OZ in 1900. So should Gruelle give Baum a footnote? Well, did Baum give Nathaniel Hawthorne a footnote when he borrowed the idea for the scarecrow from Hawthorne's 1852 story, FEATHERTOP? Nope. Like the writers of comic books, children's writers are often lax in giving credit where credit is due. That is left up to people like me who care and do the research.

Raggedy Ann is a closer relative to Baum's PATCHWORK GIRL, Patches, than she is to the scarecrow. Patches came to life in 1913 and journeyed to Oz with a young boy named Ojo to get the ingredients necessary to free a couple of folks turned to stone by a magician's accident. Patches was an early feminist, a poet, outspoken, a character containing a lot of Baum's suffragette mother-in-law in her patched-up psyche. By 1914, she was on film. I expect Johnny Gruelle bought the OZ books each Christmas and read them to his daughter as was the fashion of the times. After reading about Patches over and over, he just shifted on into his own version of what Patches and the Scarecrow might be doing, what they might have been like when they were younger, hence Raggedy Ann and Andy. Oh, he borrowed from European fairy tales like all Children's story writers, but there is more of Baum, Carroll, and Kingsley in RAGGEDY ANN than there is Grimm or Anderson or Lang. When he refers to Santa Claus fixing toys, it's certain he has read Baum's LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF SANTA CLAUS (1902). The shapes of his characters and the way they are posed and the episodic nature of their adventures all betray the influence of Baum and his major illustrator, John Rea Neill. Gruelle was not one to draw from life. He had a rep of drawing fast, a talent that triggered envy among his fellow artists who were still inking away when Johnny was on his way out the door with his fishing rod in hand. Well, Gruelle had a nice turn of brush and a flair for cuteness that made his characters popular, but it's clear he had little patience with his work. One finds a nicely rendered fantasy character here and there, but most of his illos appear to have been finished about five minutes before a deadline. RAGGEDY ANN STORIES came out in 1918, followed by RAGGEDY ANDY in 1920. The prose style was set quite early and did not change significantly. The prose is repetitious, and, unlike Baum who avoided the Victorian style of moralizing, Gruelle frequently beats his reader over the head with admonitions to be good and kind and unselfish, a habit which is offensive to the modern reader who is over six. An adult reader may still read and enjoy THE WIZARD OF OZ, but RAGGEDY ANN AND THE CAMEL WITH THE WRINKLED KNEES is likely to try even a child's patience. It is all right to ramble on and on about a simple idea when you are TELLING a story to a child night after night, but this doesn't work in the printed version and most of the RAGGEDY ANN stories are badly in need of an editor.

Johnny Gruelle was born in Arcala, Illinois, in 1880, the son of Richard B. and Alice Benton Gruelle. Along with his sister and brother, Prudence and Justin, he was raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. James Whitcomb Riley was a friend of Richard and he wrote a poem about Johnny, "The Funny Picture Man." Gruelle ran away to Cleveland, Ohio, when he was 14. He played piano in a saloon (wrote his son) and wound up drawing cartoons for THE CLEVELAND PRESS. He married Myrtle Swann in Indianapolis in 1900, and his daughter, Marcella, was born in 1902. She was Raggedy Ann.

Gruelle won a contest in 1910, which resulted in his "Mr. Twee Deedle" running until 1914 in the NEW YORK HERALD. He did "Yapp's Crossing" in JUDGE in 1911, "Yahoo Center" in the old LIFE, and "Punkin Center" in COLLEGE HUMOR. He moved his family to Silvermine, Connecticut around 1911 and lived there for six years. His sons, Worth, and Richard were born in Connecticut. Worth continued the RAGGEDY ANN stories after his father death in 1938.

Marcella did not live to see the RAGGEDY ANN stories in print. She was vaccinated for something and got an infection which affected her heart and caused her death. She was 14. She died on March 21, 1916. Worth remembers her being six or seven when Johnny started telling her the stories about Raggedy Ann. The first book was published September 10, 1918 by P. F. Volland. Originally, Gruelle did the stories in verse, but Volland said it would read better in prose, so Johnny took his advice and changed them for publication. Like Baum, Gruelle was interested in establishing fairy tales which were intrinsically American. He did MY VERY OWN FAIRY TALES in 1917, but after the enormous success of the Raggedy Ann stories and dolls, he focused on the two rag dolls. He did 27 books before his death, 18 of them about RAGGEDY ANN and ANDY. Jerome Kern wrote a song called "Raggedy Ann" which was sung in STEPPING STONES on Broadway in 1923. There were Raggedy Ann Mother-daughter dresses, Raggedy Ann haircuts, even Raggedy Ann salads. The Gruelles moved to Miami Springs, Florida. Johnny had been somewhat sick for three years and he died of heart disease on January 9, 1938.

The Johnny Gruelle Company was formed in 1939. Worth Gruelle told John Canemaker that his mother took some material to Disney in California shortly after his father died. He said that his father and Disney were friends, but this is doubtful. Gruelle isn't mentioned in any of the Disney bios and he was never in California and Disney was there from the mid-twenties on, so when would they have met to become friends? Ms. Gruelle was turned down at Disney and told that eventually the Raggedy Ann material would be in the public domain and they would get it for nothing. Well, I doubt this story, too, Worth. Sorry. I think Disney's people looked over the Raggedy Andy material and decided there just wasn't enough of a story there. This was a time when Walt was working on BAMBI and PINOCCHIO. There is no conflict in the Raggedy stories. Even when the material was finally animated in full-length in 1977, spectacle transcended character and story. Fleischer did a 20 minute short of RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY on December 6, 1940. It just wasn't up to Disney standards and still isn't.

Which don't mean the Camel with the Wrinkled Knees ain't a good person, just that he's more fun to look at than read about.

-CLAY GEERDES, 12 15 86

COMIX PLUGOLA

1986

MY MONSTER HAS A HEADACHE
ELMO AND ELWOOD 1
ODDBALL KICKS 1
CANNIBALS
BABYFAT 55, 56, 57
GUN & BOAT 3
FIRST EMPIRE FUNNIES (3D ED)
FRIED BRAINS 18,19,20,21, 22
DUCK 'N MATTRESS 1,2,3,4
SMART ASS OL' WHITE WOMEN
MINI-TIPS 3
WEIRD PUKE (GAITHER)
MONSTERS AIN'T SO BAD
SLEAZY HORROR 12 (SLOANE)
CRAZY CRAP (BORS)
BROKE 'N' HART 3
PUNKOUT 1,2
GRIT! (WALTMAN)
STONER MAN 12 (PARSONAVICH)
HOW'S IT GOIN' (ERLING)
DANCE OF DEATH 10
BETSY 1,2,3,4 (CASLOR)
HAHAHA! 1 (TOM CHRISTOPHER)
ISLAND OF GIANT MONSTERS
VISION 3 (PARSONAVICH)
SCARY COMICS 1 (SLOANE)
WEIRD WABBITS 1
THE ACCUSERS (DISSMEYER)
MORIBUND LOVE (DISSMEYER $1.39)
LIEBESAUSSCHWEIFUNGEN (1.39)
EARTH FIND (PASTERNAK)
GROWING UP WEIRD 3 (WILLIAMS)
UNWELCOME AWARENESS (CAD)
REVENGE OF THE JORKS (BORS)
SURROUNDED AND FRIGHTENED
XXX (GAITHER ET AL)
RETROS 1,2,3,4 (JONES)
ZEITGEIST 1,2,3 (GAITHER)
COMIX WAVE MAG 27,28 (1.39 EA.)
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(COMIX WAVE 25/SPECIAL)

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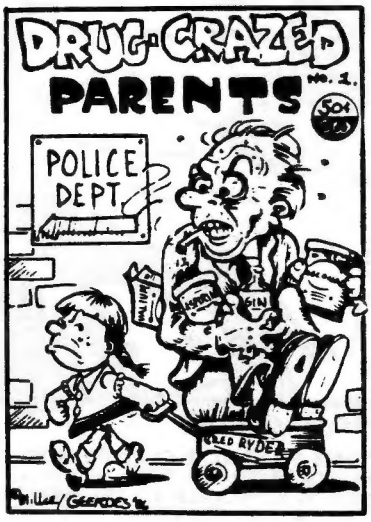

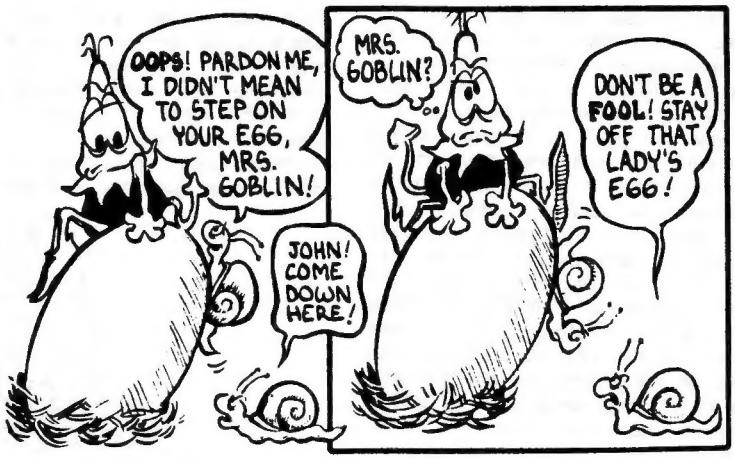
OOPS! PARDON ME, I DIDN'T MEAN TO STEP ON YOUR EGG, MRS. GOBLIN!
JOHN! COME DOWN HERE!
MRS. GOBLIN?
DON'T BE A FOOL! STAY OFF THAT LADY'S EGG!